THE PASSION FOR PLAY.

Temples of Chance in the Crescent City—An Extra-Legal Agreement.

[New Orleans Cor. Chicago Times.]

"Within four blocks of where we stand," said a well-informed resident to me, "there are no fewer than seventy-five gambling houses in full blast." The place was the Henry Clay station, at the intersection of St. Charles and Royal streets with Canal street, the very heart of the city; the hour, 7 p. m. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you a feature of New Orleans life worth looking into," and we strolled into Royal street. The sidewalks of that narrow, ancient, foreign-seeming thoroughfare were thronged with people—eager, intense, hurried crowds were pouring in and out of the antique buildings which line it on either side. Through half opened doors could be plainly seen the elaborate paraphernalia of the gamester, and ever and anon the monotonous tones of the dealer as he called forth certain mysterious numbers were borne out upon the evening breezes into the busy street.

We allowed ourselves to float with the tide, and presently we were surveying the interior of one of these temples of chance and gazing upon the highly-impressive spectacle of 500 able-bodied individuals, representing all nationalities and races, and speaking as many tongues as the brickmasons at Babel, all engaged in the noble pastime of "bucking keno." Seated at the long tables intently studying their cards were Americans, Mexicans, Italians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Cubans, Greeks, Chinese, negroes—a polyglot assemblage, truly. A half dozen other games were in progress in the large hall, but keno seemed to be the most powerful attraction. There was nothing "gilded" about the appointments of the house, and the only thing to invite special comment was the openness and publicity with which everything was conducted. The hall was on the main floor and opened directly upon the street, and similar scenes were witnessed in a half dozen buildings in the immediate vicinity. "There are laws against gambling in Louisiana, as in every other state," said my companion, "but no attempt is ever made to enforce them. It would be impossible. Gambling-houses are conducted with the same openness and publicity in New Orleans as any legitimate business. It always has been so, and, I presume, always will be so until our people change their natures."

The spirit of gambling seems to be in the very air of New Orleans. It appears to have possession of all classes of the community, and it manifests itself in a great variety of ways. It is not of recent growth. From the original settlement of New Orleans, nearly 200 years ago, down to the present time, its people have wooed the goddess of chance with all the fervor and eagerness which characterize them to-day. Gaming is the popular vice of the Latins, who have stamped their impress so indelibly upon the morals and manners of this city. The passion for play is contagious, and it has been fostered in New Orleans by the course of events. The long reign of king cotton, inducing constant ventures into the field of speculation, and the uncertainties growing out of the civil war and the abolition of slavery, only served to spread and intensify the gaming fever, and to-day it rages as violently as ever.

In conversation with a city official he told me of an arrangement which has been in force for many years and which, although extra-legal, is maintained by general consent. Every gambling-house in the city pays a stipulated sum each month into the hands of the mayor, and the amounts so raised are set apart for the support of the almshouse. That institution is wholly maintained by the contributions of the keepers of gaming-houses, and has not cost the taxpayers a penny for years. Thus the gambling-houses are virtually licensed, although without any authority of law, and their keepers are practically under official protection, so long as they pay their assessments regularly, preserve order, and permit no "crooked work" in their establishments.

The First Freed Slave in America.

[Cor. Washington Post.]

Not very far from Tokay, on the Cape Fear river, is the site of another old southern homestead, Owen hill, in whose family graveyard is the tombstone of the first slave to whom an American master voluntarily gave his freedom. This slave was Omereh, an Arabian prince of the Foulah tribe, who was taken captive by a victorious negro tribe and sold as a prisoner of war to a slaver off the coast of Guinea. Omereh ran away from his first master, a South Carolina cotton-planter, and was caught and put in the Fayetteville jail to await the arrival of his owner.

In the meantime Governor Owen, of Owen hill, heard of the erect, handsome slave, who had written all over the walls of his cell in unknown characters. His curiosity was excited. He went to the jail, saw Omereh, knew at once that he was not a negro, and surmised from his bearing that he was a person of some dignity in his own country. When the cotton planter came to claim his property he readily accepted Governor Owen's check for the full value of the slave he could neither understand nor manage. Omereh was taken to Owen hill, was taught to speak English, his strange history was told to his master, and he was converted from his Mohammedanism. Governor Owen offered him his freedom, and he lived in comfort at Owen hill until he died at an advanced age, and was buried as a member of the family, in the family burying-ground. A slab of marble marks his grave.

Tree-Culture on the Plains.

[Chicago Tribune.]

Tree-culture on the plains is making rapid progress under wise encouragement by the government. It is not unusual now to see in naturally treeless regions farmers' and mechanics' homes surrounded by thriving groves. The cottonwood, the tree indigenous to the watercourses of the west, is reinforced by the western catalpa, white ash, white elm, black walnut, locust, mulberry, silver maple, red cedar, and the willow.

Napoleon's Pulse.

A French doctor states that the first Napoleon's pulse beat but forty-five times a minute, whereas the average pulse of well men is given at sixty.

WINTER IN CALIFORNIA.

How the Weather Differs from Winter in New England.

[San Francisco Bulletin.]

After Thanksgiving, winter. In the Atlantic states, east of the Hudson, good sleighing is expected at this date. Here nothing more than a few white frosts indicate that winter has come. There have been frosts in the lowlands during the past week. Last night the frost crept up on the hillsides a little. The crystals lay on the plank sidewalks in the suburban towns and sparkled as the rays of the rising sun touched them. For a moment or two there were millions of diamonds, then small drops of water, and then nothing. But the frost makes crisp mornings, and a coal or wood fire most enjoyable morning and evening—the wood fire especially. Moreover, the frosts help to color the foliage, although in this country the deciduous trees drop the greater part of their foliage before the frosts come. The soft maples, elms, white birches and locust trees, which have been naturalized here, for the most part, have cast their leaves. Yet the maples take on a wreath of color before the leaves fall; so the frost does not do all the coloring. Even the eucalyptus, which casts its leaves at midsummer and continues dropping them until late in autumn, has a wealth of color which is hardly noticed. The coniferous trees prevail so largely in California that the high colors of deciduous trees which grow on the hillsides and mountain slopes of eastern states are rarely seen here. Yet in every dell after the first frosts have come in this latitude, one may find patches of color shading off from gold to scarlet, with a great many subdued tones, which artists, who are good colorists, do not fail to notice. The firs and the pines clothe many of the mountains in eternal green. When they are bare, they are as desolate as in Spain until the vernal season sets in.

The first rains have already come. But the winter rains have not yet appeared. There is a sort of hush between the autumn and winter. If one goes to the wood, he will hear hardly any other sound than that of the harsh and obstreperous bluejay. Here and there will be a tapping on the trunks, and an occasional squirrel descends to see what provision in the way of acorns there may be left on the ground. In the open, where the ground is soft, there are the tracks of the sneaking coyote. Even owls cease in a measure to hoot in the winter season, and the mournful sound of doves has altogether ceased. A great silence has fallen upon the woods. There is hardly a singing bird. The linnets in the suburban gardens, which two months ago were so active in feasting on the ripe fruit, beginning even earlier with cherries, and continuing until the last ripe pear had disappeared, have become silent also. No more songs and no more depredations, for the good reason that there is nothing to steal, and the pairing season has not begun. The white frosts are the fitting introduction of winter. They precede the heavier rains.

The trade winds have died out. They will not prevail in this latitude before the middle of next May. Some are unkind enough to say that it is a pity that they should ever prevail. But these winds are the Lord's scavengers, sent up as so many messagers from the salt ocean to deliver the city from plague and pestilence. San Francisco has not been a clean city from the day of its foundation. There is Oriental dirt, and Occidental dirt. It has come to be a foreign city. Merchandise fills the sidewalks, and in many places crowds the pedestrian into the street. Offal is thrown there. The six months' trade winds of summer and the six months' rain are the two sanitary agents which keep watch and ward over the city. The most dangerous weeks of the year, on the score of health, are those when neither the trade winds nor the rains prevail. The winter season being less pronounced in this latitude, there is less disposition to store up anything. All the season is open, and even now the bees are making honey, or are going to rob other hives. For in this state even the bees have caught the spirit of the monopolist. They get a part of their honey honestly, and, as to the rest, they do not scruple to get it dishonestly.

The Child in Literature.

[Atlantic Monthly.]

There was a time, just beyond the memory of men now living, when the child was born in literature. At the same period books for children began to be written. There were children, indeed, in literature before Wordsworth created Alice Fell and Lucy Gray, or breathed the line beginning,

She was a phantom of delight,

and there were books for the young before Mr. Day wrote "Sanford and Merton;" especially is it to be noted that Goldsmith, who was an avant-courier of Wordsworth, had a very delightful perception of the child, and amused himself with him in the "Vicar of Wakefield," while he or his double entertained his little friends in real life with the "Renowned History of Goody Two Shoes." Nevertheless there has been, since the day of Wordsworth, such a succession of childish figures in prose and verse that we are justified in believing childhood to have been discovered at the close of the last century. The child has now become so common that we scarcely consider how absent he is from the earlier literature. Men and women are there, lovers, maidens, and youth, but these are all with us still. The child has been added to the dramatis personæ of modern literature.

Bad Days for Fishermen.

[F. H. Stauffer in The Current.]

Among fishermen, Candlemas Day, the first Monday in April ("the day on which Cain was born and Abel was slain"), the second Monday in August ("the day on which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed"), and Dec. 31 ("the day upon which Judas was born"), were regarded as evil days.

A California Vampire.

A vampire bat was recently captured at Lewis station, El Dorado county, Cal., the wings of which when extended measured twenty-one and a half inches. It had a tail two inches in length, like a rat's.

A Buddhist temple has been opened in Paris, and the priest comes from Ceylon to enlighten the French.

NOT AS I WILL.

[Helen Hunt.]

"Not as I will!" the sound grows sweet
Each time my lips the words repeat.
"Not as I will!" the darkness feels
More safe than light when this thought steals
Like whispered voice to calm and bless
All unrest and all loneliness.
"Not as I will!" because the One
Who loved us first and best has gone
Before us on the road, and still
For us must all His life fulfill,
"Not as we will!"

RINGS AND BANGLES.

The Extraordinary Decorations Which Dandies are Beginning to Display.

[New York Sun.]

Two men boarded a Broadway car one night at Twenty-first street. Their faces have been familiar in the windows of the Union club for many years. One of them is tall, rather corpulent, and red-faced, and the other is very similar, except that he isn't tall. They sat down stiffly, and looked with owl-like severity at the signs on the roof of the car until they arrived at Delmonico's, where they alighted. The taller of the two wore three rings on the third finger of his left hand, one on the little finger and two additional rings on his right hand. As he displayed them all by resting his hands on his knees, the other passengers had a good opportunity for examining them. Of the three rings on his left hand, the upper one was of plain silver, but square-edged. The second one was gold. A valuable diamond was set in it, flanked by a huge ruby on either side. The third ring was a wide band of gold with a sapphire imbedded in it. There was a seal ring on the little finger of that hand. Of the two rings on his right hand, one was a heavily chased serpent with a diamond in the head, and the other was a very thin and delicate plain gold ring. The fat hands of the other man were quite as profusely decorated, and he wore a plain silver bangle on his left wrist. The bangle was riveted on. The spectacle of these two gorgeously bedecked and bejeweled club men drew attention to the fact that the wearing of many finger rings has suddenly become very popular in New York. A jeweler who was subsequently spoken to about the matter said:

"Ten men buy rings now where one bought them a year ago, and they are nearly all of the glove-ring pattern—that is, the stone is not set up from the ring, as is the case with solitaire diamond rings which ladies wear, but it is set in gold on a level with the surface of the ring, so he can draw on his gloves without removing his ring. The fashion came, as all such fashions do, from across the water. The French dandies are in the habit of wearing all sorts of rings, the majority of them being souvenirs from some of their romance escapades. The fashion spread to England, where it flourished two or three years ago. It is no longer considered proper on the other side for men to wear a number of rings unless they are utterly valueless. I have seen men who were undoubtedly entitled to a leading position on the other side who wore five or six rings, the total value of which would not have exceeded $15. One would, perhaps, be a small shell ring bought for a shilling at some seaside resort, kept to commemorate a moonlight stroll, or perhaps something like that; another would be a plain and narrow band of gold twisted from a bangle in a ball-room; a third a little circlet from a child, niece, or sister, and so on throughout. That sort of thing never looked vulgar on the other side, but over here it is likely to arrive at great proportions, and the richer the man the more rings he wears."

"What about the masculine bangle?"

"I believe the duke of Beaufort started the fashion years ago, and it has been continued by a number of American actors, dudes and fools. It is of all affectations the most effeminate. I am glad to say we have only had three men who desired that sort of ornamentation. The bangle is nearly always of silver and without any embellishment. Two men who recently departed to different and remote quarters of the world came in not long ago and had bracelets riveted on their left wrists. They don't expect to meet again for years, so they indulged in this little bit of romance. This was the solidest reason I ever heard of for the musculine bangle, and that wasn't very solid, either, when you come to look it squarely in the eye."

The Pantagraph in Art.

[New York Mail and Express.]

"It was thought the pantagraph would make any one an artist," said a commercial artist as he ran the tracer of the little machine over the outlines of a peculiarly shaped picture. "But I can tell you it hasn't. When it was first invented it was a novel idea to be able, say in a small photograph, to trace correctly the outlines to a mathematical certainty, life size, or any desired size, almost, on another paper. In other words, to literally trace an enlarged silhouette from a small picture. It was a capital idea, but artists are born, not made.

"After the picture was enlarged, and all the outlines faithfully transferred, it was found that to fill in and give expression could not be done by any one but an artist. The invention of the pantagraph created a sensation. Rapid artists went all over the United States giving lessons to classes and selling the instruments. Each pupil bought an instrument and a few boxes of crayon. Very few were ever known afterward to succeed in making a picture that resembled the original, much less to become artists."

"Are the pantagraphs much used?"

"They are used mostly now to trace maps and irregular mechanical drawing. See, I am enlarging the interior view of a Pullman palace-car, and, instead of using a rule to draw the perspective lines and get the seats an equal distance apart, I do it all in a short time with the pantagraph."

A Strange Flower.

[Chicago Herald.]

In South America a shrub of the cactus family has been discovered whose flowers are visible only when the wind blows. The plant is about three feet in height, and on the stalk are a number of little lumps from which the flowers protrude when the wind blows upon them.

China began the use of postal cards the first day of the new year.